THE 10 out of 10 Times

Working in partnership with Peterborough, Essex, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Schools

SPECIAL EDITION
May 2012

Cambridgeshire County Council

Cambridgeshire Catering & Cleaning Services

Market research shows CCS is on the right track

In this newsletter we look at what you have achieved over the last four years. We will share with you the results of market research that was completed with Primary School Headteachers, parents and pupils, Secondary students and you, CCS catering staff.

At the end of last year CCS began a programme of market research with AVF Marketing. This started by talking to Primary Headteachers and parents so that two questionnaires could be developed. These were then sent out and the data collected and analysed. Secondary students took part in a series of focus groups where they could put forward ideas that they would like to see introduced. These ideas were also put into a questionnaire so that we could get the opinions of a wider sample size. A communications survey was completed for CCS staff and you may well have completed the questionnaire so that your opinion has been included.

The main aim of the research was to find out what customers thought about the service provided, if there were any areas that could be improved or developed, and suggest some ideas to a wider sample size to get feedback. Finally to compare the results in 2012 with those from 2008 which helped create the 10 out of 10 campaign.

The results from all areas were both very informative and satisfying. They showed that customers had really appreciated the changes that have been made. Many of the questions were first asked in 2008 and so we have comparisons that show where the situation has got better, stayed the same or declined. In any research there are areas that can be improved and this is what CCS is looking at in its next marketing plan.

A very warm thank you

Richard Ware, Head of CCS, said, "The research shows very clearly that the hard work completed in recent years has been appreciated by all our customers. I was delighted to see that the highest scores from Headteachers related to the helpfulness of catering staff, the speed of service and the support provided by the area Contract Manager. I want to say a very special thank you to everyone in CCS who has contributed to this success. It has been a real team effort and has helped put CCS on a firm financial footing for the future. We are now making a financial contribution to the authority rather than being a drain on the authority's resources. This is really important in such difficult trading conditions."

What did Primary School Headteachers say?

Here are some of the results from Headteachers. 94.8% of Headteachers rated the service as good, very good or OK. This was a 6.5% increase on the good and very good score in 2008. 99% of Headteachers said the helpfulness of catering staff was very good, good or OK and 96.9% said the same about the availability of healthy eating. 54.2% wanted plates and bowls for Key Stage 2 and 55.2% thought there should be a price difference between Key Stages 1 and 2.

One area that CCS can develop further is the workshops in bakery, fruit and vegetable awareness. Some schools run them on their own while others value the service provided by CCS. Why not ask your Headteacher if they would like CCS to run a workshop at your school? They are a great way to educate pupils about healthy eating and they might soon become regular customers.

Teachers are not using the www.myschoollunch.co.uk website as much as we would like and this shows that we need to promote it again as happened in 2008. It needs to be an ongoing process of promotion as new children start each year.

CCS is always keen to hear from Headteachers about what CCS should represent and this came out very clearly. They want:

1. Quality food
2. Provision of healthy food
3. Support from onsite staff
4. Good value for money
5. Information provided to parents

The biggest improvement between 2008 and 2012 was in the support provided by the area catering manager as the good and very good ranking rose by over 30%. The next largest improvement was 17.7% on value for money and 16.8% on presentation of the food.

Diana Round, Operations Manager, said "I am really pleased that the research has shown how much Headteachers appreciate the effort we have put in over the last four years. The results are very helpful and will form our marketing plan moving forward. May I thank all the Headteachers that responded as I know how busy they are and I do appreciate the number of responses we received."

10 out of 10 did make a difference

The research with catering staff showed that some were unsure about the success of the Ten out of Ten Campaign.
So here are some of the things that were achieved:

1. A sales increase of 33% over four years.
2. An extra 4,134 customers per day compared to four years ago.
3. No increase in the Primary School meal price since September 2009.
4. Improved reputation of CCS as can be seen by this research.
5. Political support from all parties.
6. Lower staff turnover in the last four years.

Matt Gooderham, Operations Manager, said, "If it had not been for the 10 out of 10 campaign then I know we would not be in the strong financial position that we are in today. I believe it galvanised the team in 2008 and it made us realise that we had to get closer to our customers and not only deliver a quality meal but also tell more people about what we were doing and how the meals were prepared. It was a huge effort but as you can see from the results in this newsletter it brought fantastic benefits."

Secondary school students see a big difference

The number of students staying for a meal in Secondary schools has risen dramatically; in 2008 49.3% of respondents stayed for a meal five days a week and in 2012 it was 60.4%. These sorts of improvements run right through the research with students, for example the overall impression of describing the service as good and very good has risen from 47.9% to 65.2% with another 31.9% saying OK.

There are issues with free meals as 55.6% said they were not taking up their entitlement as they wanted to eat with friends and another 38.9% were given a packed lunch by their parents. However, 60.4% of students are having a free meal five days a week in 2012 compared to 49.3% in 2008. The results clearly show there is an opportunity to increase the number of free meals served and it will be interesting to see how the recent campaign with the Welfare Benefits Office has improved take up. This research for Secondary Schools will be repeated in 2013.

The research looked at a number of ideas that students had put forward in the focus groups. The responses showed that we need to relook at the "Meal Deal" offer as it was not clear enough and students were not quite sure what was included. The next issue related to the sandwich service and there are issues about the sales mix of fillings, the types of bread used and the variety from one day to another.

Another improvement area relates to drinks and this is always going to be a challenge when meeting the requests of customers and the Government's nutritional standards. However there are a number of positive suggestions in the overall results that we will be looking at, they include:

- 51.5% wanted better information about what is on the menu displayed around the school.
- 54.8% wanted prices displayed on the counter.
- 43.1% asked for a vegetarian option each day.
- 63.9% wanted an increase in the portion size of pizza.
- 52.6% wanted the availability of fruit to be extended.
- 51% requested more theme days and 68.7% asked for special offers each day.
- 75.4% wanted a better range of drinks.
- At mid morning break students wanted hot rolls such as bacon and sausage with an extra service point.

The good news is that 81.1% would use the service more if these changes were introduced and spend an extra £1.32. The research shows that respondents had an extra £2.05 to spend so they do have the money.

Rachel Parker, Secondary School Contract Manager, said, "The research shows the results for individual schools and the figures above are combined for all those that took part. There are variations and I am discussing the individual results with the catering teams involved so that a specific plan of action is created for each school. This will be very useful as we strive to improve the service still further."

Your view from the front line

In general terms it is very clear that communications within CCS in the last few years have improved. CCS can always do better and that is one of the main reasons for undertaking the research.

The research showed that training was highly rated and a lot of people asked for more information about upcoming courses and this will be included in future Catering Circulars. 57.7% of respondents said the circular was easy to read and a good source of information.

70.4% of respondents said there was enough opportunity to give feedback and this is already happening with the Caterers' Forum. 20.7% said they didn't need any more training and a further 60.4% said they were well trained and continued to receive training as they needed it. 66.8% described the training as effective or very effective with another 22.9% saying it was useful. 81.9% had an induction and found it useful and helped you settle into your new jobs.

Richard Ware, commented, "The information in this survey is exceptionally useful. It shows that we have come a long way in developing the way we provide information to you. For example the weekly Catering Circular continues to be a key tool but we can still improve it with more eye catching information about training courses, early news about upcoming job vacancies and new ideas that have proved successful for increasing meal numbers. I must say a big thank you to all those that took part and it is very much appreciated."

Parents have seen the improvements and 85% of them now want to pay online

Fourteen Primary Schools took part in the market research and they were spread across the County. Over the next few paragraphs we will look at the overall results. Diana Round, Operations Manager, said, "We had nearly 600 questionnaires returned so this represents a big survey for Cambridgeshire. The results are very encouraging. For example 92.3% of parents said their overall impression was either good or OK and 90.6% said the value for money was good or OK. Our website had good scores once people had visited it but we needed to ask them to visit it first, we need to do more work in this area. The best figure to my mind was the 86.9% of parents that said they were happy with the catering service provided at their child's school."

80.0% of parents said they took up their entitlement to free meals and of these only 67.5% took up the option five days a week. The reasons given for not having a free meal were: 26.7% not getting enough information; 46.7% said their child prefers sandwiches; and 40.0% saying they have a meal in the evening. An excellent 83.4% of respondents said they had enough information about school meals and the information they wanted was: the menu this week; how healthy eating was promoted to children; and the nutritional content of the meal.

92.8% of parents can access the Internet at home and 82.4% of children are able to use it at home. 70.2% of parents have a social media account such as Facebook and twitter. 16.8% of parents are already playing the games in the funfair with their children and this is encouraging but there is a huge opportunity to increase this. 85.0% of parents wanted to pay for a school meal online and this programme is in the process of rolling out to schools.

In the final question: 85.7% of parents said the school meal was good value for money; 90.6% said the menu was child friendly; and 83.5% said there were plenty of healthy options each day.

The way ahead

As this newsletter goes to print CCS is well on the way to creating a new marketing strategy for the next three years. The market research identified nearly forty points for further action. These are now being refined and placed into priority order in a marketing plan that will come into effect in the new academic year (i.e. September).

Here is a taster of what is to come:

- Creation of a new CCS customer service promise.
- Creating a new marketing toolkit that will give you the option to produce professional materials that can be printed in school and personalised with school crests, promotional information and local content.
- New sections will be added to the website so that parents can gain information about school meals when starting school and moving up to Secondary School.
- A special Birthday Party promotion with two different offers.
- A new sandwich service in Secondary Schools.
- Using special offers to deflect concerns about price.

Please look out for more information in the coming months.